

## IN THE CLAIMS

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1. (Currently Amended) A tampon applicator comprising:

a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a fingergrip area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said fingergrip area having at least one substantially flattened surface with at least one gripping structure selected from the group consisting of embossments other than ribs, slits, perforations, lances, pressure sensitive adhesive, and any combinations thereof, wherein said fingergrip area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein said at least one substantially flattened surface and said at least one gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

2. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said fingergrip area comprises at least one pair of diametrically opposed, substantially flattened surfaces.

3. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said fingergrip area comprises an odd number of substantially flattened surfaces, and wherein at least one of said substantially flattened surfaces is diametrically opposed to a pair of adjoined substantially flattened surfaces.

4. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said fingergrasp area further comprises at least two angled shoulder surfaces.

5. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 4, wherein said at least one substantially flattened surface is at least two substantially flattened surfaces, and wherein each of said at least two angled shoulder surfaces are disposed adjacent to each of said at least two substantially flattened surfaces on said fingergrasp area.

6. (Canceled).

7. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said at least one gripping structure is raised above said at least one substantially flattened surface.

8. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said at least one gripping structure is depressed below said at least one substantially flattened surface.

9. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said at least one gripping structure is aligned with an outer surface of said at least one substantially flattened surface.

10. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein said at least one gripping structure has a position selected from the group consisting of tilted

towards an outer surface of said at least one substantially flattened surface, tilted away from an outer surface of said at least one substantially flattened surface, and any combination thereof.

11. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 1, wherein the tampon applicator further comprises a plunger, and wherein said plunger and said fingergrasp area have substantially the same cross-sectional shape.

C 12. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 11, wherein said cross-sectional shape is selected from the group consisting of: rectangular, square, triangular, or hexagonal.

13. (Previously Amended) A tampon applicator comprising:

a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a fingergrasp area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said fingergrasp area having at least one convex gripping surface with at least one gripping structure, wherein said fingergrasp area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein said at least one convex gripping surface and said at least one gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

14. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 13, wherein said finger grip area comprises at least one pair of diametrically opposed, convex gripping surfaces.

15. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 13, wherein said finger grip area comprises an odd number of convex gripping surfaces, and wherein at least one of said convex gripping surfaces is diametrically opposed to a pair of adjoining convex gripping surfaces.

16. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 13, wherein said finger grip area further comprises at least two angled shoulder surfaces.

17. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 16, wherein said at least one convex gripping surface is at least two convex gripping surfaces, and wherein each of said at least two angled shoulder surfaces are disposed adjacent to each of said at least two convex gripping surfaces on said finger grip area.

18. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 13, wherein said at least one gripping structure is selected from the group consisting of embossments, protuberances, slits, grooves, louvers, perforations, lances, abrasive media, high wet coefficient of friction materials, pressure sensitive adhesives, and any combinations thereof.

19. (Previously Amended) A tampon applicator comprising:

a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a finger grip area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said finger grip area having at least one concave gripping surface with at least one gripping structure selected from the group consisting of embossments, slits, perforations, lances, pressure sensitive adhesives, and any combinations thereof, wherein said finger grip area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein said at least one concave gripping surface and said at least one gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

20. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 19, wherein said finger grip area comprises at least one pair of diametrically opposed, concave gripping surfaces.

21. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 19, wherein said finger grip area comprises an odd number of concave gripping surfaces, and wherein at least one of said concave gripping surfaces is diametrically opposed to a pair of adjoining concave gripping surfaces.

22. (Original) The tampon applicator of claim 19, wherein said fingergrip area further comprises at least two angled shoulder surfaces.

23. (Previously Amended) The tampon applicator of claim 22, wherein said at least one concave gripping surface is at least two concave gripping surfaces, and wherein each of said at least two angled shoulder surfaces are disposed adjacent to each of said at least two concave gripping surfaces on said fingergrip area.

24. (Canceled).

25. (New) A tampon applicator comprising:

a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a fingergrip area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said fingergrip area having an odd number of substantially flattened surfaces with at least one gripping structure selected from the group consisting of embossments, slits, perforations, lances, pressure sensitive adhesive, and any combinations thereof, wherein said fingergrip area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein at least one of said substantially flattened surfaces is diametrically opposed to a pair of adjoined substantially flattened surfaces, and

wherein said odd number of substantially flattened surfaces and said at least one

gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

26. (New) A tampon applicator comprising:

C | a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a fingergrip area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said fingergrip area having at least one substantially flattened surface with at least one gripping structure selected from the group consisting of embossments, slits, perforations, lances, pressure sensitive adhesive, and any combinations thereof, wherein said fingergrip area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein said at least one gripping structure is depressed below said at least one substantially flattened surface, and

wherein said at least one substantially flattened surface and said at least one gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

27. (New) A tampon applicator comprising:

a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a fingergrip area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said

fingergrasp area having an odd number of convex gripping surfaces with at least one gripping structure, wherein said fingergrasp area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein at least one of said convex surfaces is diametrically opposed to a pair of adjoining convex surfaces, and

C wherein said odd number of convex gripping surfaces and said at least one gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

28. (New) A tampon applicator comprising:

a barrel adapted to house a pledget therein and to receive a plunger therein, said barrel having a fingergrasp area adapted to partially house and engage said plunger, said fingergrasp area having an odd number of concave gripping surfaces with at least one gripping structure selected from the group consisting of embossments, slits, perforations, lances, pressure sensitive adhesives, and any combinations thereof, wherein said fingergrasp area has a reduced diameter relative to said barrel,

wherein at least one of said concave gripping surfaces is diametrically opposed to a pair of adjoining concave gripping surfaces, and



wherein said odd number of concave gripping surfaces and said at least one gripping structure provide gripping ability to overcome ejection forces applied to said barrel by said pledget and/or said plunger.

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